8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

121 gimbi in the north, and the Liverpool River country behind Oenpelli in the west and south-west, seems to be virtually uninhabited.

161 Although Arnhem Land covers a large area, its population has been assessed at only about four thousand. This includes Aborigines on Mission stations, where tentative census figures are available, while in regions away from direct supervision only approximate estimates have been made. There are only three large un-contacted areas in the whole of Arnhem Land: about the Liverpool and King rivers, and the mainland south of Milingimbi; the neighbourhood of Rose River; and the hills in the south-western corner of Arnhem Land. However, it is only in the first two places that Aborigines are to be found in any numbers, and both together probably contain no more than about a thousand people. These Liverpool groups have been gradually displaced, within recent years, by the westward pressure of people from Cape Stewart and the south of Milingimbi, and many of them forced to fluctuate between Goulburn Islands, Oenpelli and the Buffalo camps. They would number today no more than approximately four hundred.

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114 This area, from Rose River in the south to Goulburn Island and Oenpelli in the west, has been mentioned in early literature, particularly by such travellers as Sir Mathew Flinders and Phillip King;[3] and in recent years various authors such as Ion Idriess,[4] Charles Barrett,[5] W. E. Harney,[6] Alan Marshall,[7] Carl Warburton,[8] Ernestine Hill,[9] Colin Simpson[10] and Clyde Fenton[11] have tended to over-glamorise Arnhem Land and its people.

The most important and detailed information concerning the historical and geographical background of Arnhem Land is not generally accessible,[12] although Alfred Searcy[13] provides some valuable notes and reminiscences. But despite some interesting references to the contact of Europeans with natives, these books and notes concern themselves very little with the local people and their lives.

Missionaries too have helped to add to the existing documentary evidence.[14] Professor Lloyd Warner[15] carried out social

THE SECOND QUARRY, MENTIONED ABOVE, IS LOCATED IN THE
411 Liverpool area, but spear heads from this source are regarded
431 as much inferior to the *ŋämbi*, and are also known by a
[3 16]
[135] distinctive name.

166 This much even the newcomer, who has his eyes about
431 him, sees for himself. It is clear that *gerri* circulate freely in Arnhem Land and far beyond, that the movements of certain special elements of material culture are extensive, and that they are not dependent upon the entry of the white man or the breaking down of the culture. As we have seen, the movements of the people themselves are restricted generally to their own clan territories and to those of a few neighbouring groups with whom a special relationship has been established, except on certain ceremonial occasions, or on *miriŋo* (war-making or avenging) expeditions. At other times they do not move very far afield, or at least they did not do so in former times. And again, we have seen that the very nature of the social organisation, the division of the whole of the territory among totemic clans each with its own intense internal solidarity and its equally strong opposition to other clans, was calculated to hinder and restrict, rather than to encourage, free intercourse between clans whose territories lay any distance apart.

431 How then are the *gerri* which bear, unmistakably, the stamp of origin in far away territories, actually circulated? By what means are they passed from group to group, and what is the motive force which brings boomerangs as well as other elements foreign to this culture at least two or three hundred miles from their place of origin, into a territory where their very function is lost? What, again, causes parcels containing *ŋämbi* to be brought considerably more than a hundred miles from the quarry where they were made? How do pounding and grinding stones, which are

12: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1933 OI17 Murngin OI17

and custom, then it appears that all the people of the area indicated belong to the one tribe, which for the time being must remain nameless.[4]

The widely separated locations of the hordes of the same *mala* present a puzzling problem. Probably migration, at least in part, accounts for it. An example of this is found in the Daiorrorr horde of the Berrkali *mala*, which within the lifetime of its present members migrated from the south of Buckingham Bay to its present location on the Goyder River. Possibly some evidence of migration is also found in the legends of the people, including the hordes along the northern coast and the islands adjacent thereto. In these legends a very large proportion of the mythological ancestors whose exploits they relate are represented as having lived and laboured and instituted the customs of the people in the neighbourhood of Caledon and Blue Mud Bays. In some cases these ancestors are represented as starting in at that point and travelling right across the country in a north-westerly direction to the opposite coast. These same legends, with local variations, are apparently found throughout the whole area, and the social organization and the customs of the people are of the one type.

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Map of North-East Arnhem Land showing approximate location of aboriginal hordes.

[4]The peoples to the west of the line indicated differ from those referred to in both language and social organization.